

Cataclysmic Proportions

by Rory O'Sullivan

Category: Batman
Language: English
Status: In-Progress
Published: 1999-04-27 08:00:00
Updated: 1999-04-27 08:00:00
Packaged: 2016-04-27 09:37:07
Rating: T
Chapters: 1
Words: 1,798
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: An accident during a sudden aftershock in Gotham gives Batman a chance to reevaluate his past

Cataclysmic Proportions

BATMAN: CATAclysmic PROPORTIONS by Rory O'Sullivan

Disaster. Pure, unadulterated mayhem, encompassing the entire city. It broke his heart, watching his home, his city, fall before the demon of nature, the earthquake.

And helplessness was driving him insane.

Batman observed the concrete shambles before him, outwardly cool and detached. But inwardly, his emotions were churning. All he'd worked to defend and protect was crumbling about him. There was nothing---

His cowl radio chirped for attention.

"Batman here."

"Bruce," It was Nightwing, his voice clear and cool, but slightly stressed. "I just got word from the scanner. There's a subway tunnel on the verge of collapsing, East 52nd. They think it's clear, but--- Can you get there?"

"I'm on it." Already he was mapping out his route. He had about five blocks to cover, and he had to be very, very careful about picking his way through the rubble.

Eventually, he came upon the decrepit subway entrance, the sign swinging free in a few separate pieces. Wearily, the Dark Knight entered, as he went producing a pocket flashlight.

The subway station was deserted, the support pillars groaning from the increased stress. Still, he owed it to Gothamites, and to

himself, to search for potential victims.

The ground beneath him trembled, and he was suddenly sprayed with fragments of plaster. His brain screamed Aftershock! even before his body twisted toward the entrance. But suddenly the nearest support snapped, keeling over. He'd barely managed to throw up his hands in protest, when everything went horribly black.

Colors swirled before Batman's eyes. He awoke, incredibly groggy, and attempted to rise.

He couldn't.

He was seized by a moment of awful panic, as he remembered the sensation of having his back broken. But then he felt the weight of the pillar across his back, and sighed in relief.

"Nightwing, come in." Static. "Nightwing?" Damn. Again, he struggled to rise, but the pillar refused to budge.

And all at once, days of sleeplessness, of running on empty, came to a head. He felt a disabling exhaustion bubble over.

It could be hours before Nightwing came looking. Hours left alone with Bruce Wayne. He smirked. Didn't even like the guy.

Maybe this was for the best, though. Since the quake, he hadn't had a chance to step back, to organize his thoughts...

Remember what it was all about...

The caped figure vaulted through the window with exaggerated finesse. Dodging, then sweeping to the left, he planted a foot in the chest of an oncoming assailant. The large attacker fell backward with more than a little resentment on his lips.

Why must this vigilante always interfere?

The vigilante in question, eyes probing and intense beneath his mask, barked, "Surrender!"

"No!"

The man produced a glistening sword from beneath his cape, and again barked, "Surrender!"

"Si, Senor Zorro!"

Satisfied, Zorro strode past his dispatched foe.

In the third row of the theater, eight-year-old Bruce Wayne suddenly remembered the necessity of blinking. The movie was incredible. The swashbuckler commanded a certain awe, simply with his presence. Amazing.

Martha Wayne leaned toward her son. "Bruce? You're spilling your popcorn."

"Oh--- sorry."

Martha smiled, and exchanged a knowing look over the boy's head with Thomas Wayne.

Merely half an hour later, the Waynes strode from the theater into the pale moonlight. A bone-chilling breeze swept in from the North, and Thomas Wayne adjusted his collar accordingly.

"Honestly, Thomas," Martha said, suppressing a shiver, "I don't know why you didn't have us chauffeured."

"You don't think Alfred deserved the night off?" he retorted. "The car is just a few blocks away."

"Well, find a shortcut, will you? I don't want to spend another minute out in this cold!"

Bruce ignored his parents' lighthearted bickering. Over and over again, he ran scenes from the movie through his head. It had been... fascinating.

Thomas led them into an alley, which bore a rusted old sign reading, 'Park Row.'

Martha eyed the seedy brownstone stoops with a weariness borne of high society. "Thomas... I don't like this place."

Thomas forced his own doubts aside. "I'm sure it's perfectly safe. Leslie lives on this block!"

"Leslie has the sense to stay home at---"

"You should listen to your wife, sir." The voice was gruff and harsh, awkward as though the formality of the tone was forced on an inner city accent. All three turned.

A simply dressed, intense man stood there. One hand, Bruce noted, rested suspiciously in his jacket pocket...

"If you don't mind, sir, the lady's pearls---" The thug reached for Martha.

A flash saw Thomas between them, seizing the mugger by the collar. Bruce strained to see around his father, see what was happening.

The crack reminded him of Zorro's horsewhip snapping down. Then his jaw dropped at the sight of his father staggering back, and falling.

The thug blew the smoke from the gun barrel.

Martha turned and began to run, hindered by her high heels. Before Bruce's horrified and astonished eyes, the mugger took careful aim, and fired. The woman fell to the pavement.

The thug turned his gun on Bruce, but the intensity, the horror, the hatred in the boy's eyes, the sheer defiance, caused him to waver. Then he about-faced, and disappeared into shadow.

Bruce sagged, fell to his knees. He remained immobile, thoroughly shocked, oblivious to the world.

A light flicked on somewhere in his peripheral vision, and Doctor Leslie Tompkins stepped into the street. Younger than she looked, but still old enough to appreciate day-to-day fatigue, she began a "What's going on out---?" Her hand shot to her mouth. She allowed herself a gasp, then her medical mind spurred her into action.

It took barely a minute to discern that the first two bodies were dead. She rose, shook her head, wiped the blood from her hands. Then, steeling herself, she approached the third form---

It moved.

Oh my God.

She dropped to her knees, ignoring the pain of landing on asphalt, and reached a tentative hand to the boy. Next, she looked into his eyes.

It was not Bruce Wayne who stared back. It was a changed boy. His tearless eyes radiated a look of pure pain.

After a seeming eternity, a cacophony of sirens filled the air. Not comprehending, not fathoming, Bruce was lead through a blur of lights, stupid questions, sympathetic eyes...

Finally, he saw Alfred.

Thank God. A familiar face.

The two stood for a beat, then Alfred his voice steady, but gentle, announced, "We'd best get home, Master Bruce, lest this unholy event take it's toll."

It already had.

The funeral had been hastily put together, and therefore sparsely attended. But Bruce welcomed the serenity. Alfred beckoned for Bruce to join the rest of the attendees at the cemetery gates.

Bruce Wayne had one more thing to do.

He turned toward the headstone, enormous to a boy his age. His voice cracked as he said, "Mother... Father..." Above, lightning cracked. He thought it appropriate. "I... swear to you... swear I'll dedicate my life to bringing your killer to justice," he sobbed. "The criminal element will pay."

Batman struggled to rise again. Confronted with all these old wounds... He wanted to be somewhere, anywhere, else.

In retrospect, he thought, the vow was the easiest part, wasn't it? My parents shaped my destiny... but I made it happen. The work to

come afterward...

Bruce Wayne nodded curtly to a gaggle of admirers, The twenty-one-year-old was acquiring quite a fan club, mostly due to his millionaire playboy status. Luckily, they had the common decency to grant him privacy as he entered the cemetery.

Retracing his twelve-year-old steps, he arrived at the graveside. It seemed so much smaller now.

"Mom, Dad," he said after a moment, "I... I'm sorry. I can't..." His mind was racing through the last few weeks of law classes he'd taken. "I can't become a police officer like I... the red tape..." He fought for the words. "I'm sorry... No. There has to be another way. I'll find it."

Gunshots at night in Gotham were to be ignored, Bruce had been taught. But tonight the sound of arms fire was just what he'd been looking for.

Tugging his ski mask into place, he mounted a rustic fire escape, and started out across the rooftops. The city was incredible up here, but he hadn't time to dwell on it.

A neat somersault brought him to street level, and the source of the fire.

Four gunmen, who had been raiding some sort of storage shed, had just executed a night watchman.

Bruce lowered his voice an octave. "Everyone down! Drop your weapons!"

The lead gangster looked up, and actually smirked. "Who're you? Mister freakin' Terrific?"

In the next moment, he was smiling out of the other side of his mouth, as Bruce's leadweight baton caught him in the cheek, dropping him.

The others reacted slowly, giving their masked assailant time to vault into the air, and come down hard on the closest thug.

A flurry of movement followed that would've done Bruce Lee proud. Bruce Wayne stood over the felled robbers.

But he wasn't satisfied.

They weren't scared of me, Batman recalled. He'd managed to free one arm, and was trying to decide if the razor blade in his glove could be of any use.

No, they weren't. I needed an edge. He smiled despite himself. Still, how the hell did I come up with this? Must've been going ba--- No. Leave the puns to the Joker.

"Nightwing? Come in."

Static.

Damn.

He returned to his reverie. So that was it. His reasons for becoming Batman were fresh in his mind.

Maybe being stuck down here isn't so bad. It's given me a confidence boost, any---

Light. A fraction of light. Then a faint voice. "Batman?"

"Nightwing!" The dust had made him thoroughly hoarse, but he yelled anyway.

The subway station entrance lit up, as rubble was cleared aside. Nightwing stepped in, and scanned the area with a flashlight.

Finally, the light rested on Batman, and he hurried to his mentor's side.

"You all right?"

"Can't complain."

"Anything broken? Okay, hang on." He produced a magnesium torch, and began surgically dicing the beam. "So, what you been up to?"

"Spent an hour with Bruce Wayne."

Nightwing smiled, hoisting the man to his feet. "Terrible company. Reminiscing?"

"Yep."

"Good memories, I hope."

Batman's face darkened. "No. But," he added, "lest we forget, Nightwing."

END

End
file.